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ABSTRACT

Before implementing its Outcome Based Education process, Pasco (Washington) progressed through three readiness stages paralleling the steps for good time management. Following a teacher strike, stage I involved taking care of essentials, such as rebuilding the relationship with teachers, cleaning up the grounds, and rewriting the district policy manual. During stage II, Pasco initiated win-win bargaining, a new teacher evaluation process, and an effective schools program. During stage III, the District intensified its search for efficiency, and finally decided on the OBE process developed by John Champlain. Based on the premise that all students can learn, OBE provided impetus for developing a new vision, training teachers, discovering "best knowledge," focusing on results or outputs, removing barriers to success, and developing teaching teams. The project succeeded because of strong board commitment, a 2-year investment in refining vision and beliefs, productive union meetings, and reliable consultation. The process could have been improved by earlier parent involvement, concentration on measurable student outcomes, celebration of small accomplishments, and greater investment in principal training and feedback. Five figures charting OBE goals and elements are appended. (33 references) (MLH)

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# One District's Journey to Success with Outcome-Based Education

by Larry Nyland

Twelve years ago Pasco School District experienced a ten day teacher strike. That culminated two decades of conflict and strife that saw race riots, board recalls and state investigations. Teachers saw themselves as victims of the conflict and unappreciated in trying to cope with the increasing needs of a growing population of poor (50%) and minority (50%) students. Pasco had reached a point where we were ready for a change (Burns, 1978). Today, despite a continued growth in at risk students, Pasco School District has been transformed into a district widely recognized for quality. Hundreds of people visit the district annually to see Outcome Based Education (OBE) in action and the district has entered a partnership with the Washington Roundtable (a coalition of Washington's largest businesses) to measure and evaluate the transformational process. Teachers have a new enthusiasm for learning. As one teacher recently commented, "Outcome Based Education has renewed our hope in making a difference."

## The Transformation Process

Pasco School District has been transformed by repeatedly asking ourselves the tough questions that create "Success Connections:"

| | |
|---|---|
| What do we want? | - vision |
| What do we know /believe? | - knowledge |
| What do we do? | - action |
| What are we getting? | - result / outcome |

Not only do these questions form the central core of the OBE process, they also share much in common with Deming's quality process (Glasser, 1990) and Tyler's curriculum development process (Gusky, 1990). Using these four questions will transform any school, district or business. (See Figure 1 - Success Connections)

Figure 2 shows four levels of transformation that districts go through to become a learning organization. At Level 1 districts treat these four functions as separate and distinct. Vision is set by the board. Knowledge is the purview of the staff development department. Action is up the curriculum department. Tests and measurements is responsible for evaluation of the results. At Level 2, districts realize the need to align these functions in a major planning activity like strategic planning. The linkages are stronger and more of the organization is involved (shown by the

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widening base of the pyramid). Level 3 districts treat all four areas in a more dynamic inter-related way. Learning in one area (results, for example) starts to spill over into another (finding new knowledge). Change, however, is still measured in terms of years and parts of the organization are still not fully engaged. Level 4 engages everyone in the creation of a learning organization envisioned by Senge (1990). As organizations develop skill in using the questions they become more dynamic (restructuring stage) and the process becomes more widespread (teaming stage).

Pasco is currently transitioning from level 3 to level 4. We find that the gap between what we want (vision) and what we get (results) creates the tension (Fritz,1984) that drives us to look at new knowledge that will enable us to get more of what we want. Gradually, we are developing the discipline necessary to ACT more quickly on our new knowledge so that we do, in fact, get more of what we want. Comfort with and active use of the success connection process is also becoming more and more widespread, indicating movement to level 4.

How did Pasco move through the transformational process? Pasco went through a two phase process. Phase one was a three-stage readiness process that took several years. Initially we addressed issues of survival, relationships and image. Success in those areas gave us the courage to address improvement processes. Only when the initial success with effective schools began to fade did we initiate the search for a truly transformational process. Phase two has been the systemic Outcome Based Education process that we have now been implementing for the last four years.

## Readiness

Pasco went through three stages that were necessary, but not sufficient, to create and sustain student success. The readiness stages we went through parallel the steps for good time management: is it essential?, is it effective? is it efficient?

**Stage I - Taking Care of Essentials** (1979-82) - Following the teacher strike, we rebuilt the relationship with the teachers, cleaned up our grounds and building appearances and rewrote the district policy manual. It took 12 months to resolve the first of twenty four outstanding grievances!

**Stage II - Implementing Effectiveness** (1982-1985) - When I became superintendent in 1982, we initiated win-win bargaining, a new teacher evaluation process and effective schools - all in one year! Teacher relations moved to a new level of trust. Our goal based evaluation process helped us work with teachers toward improvement rather than trying to catch them doing things poorly. And site based implementation of "Effective Schools" research generated rapid gains in test scores. After three years we were all tired and did not know exactly what had worked or

why. We could not find a way to sustain the enthusiasm of staff or the test score gains for students.

**Stage III - Searching for Efficiency** (1985-1987) - We were in transition (Bridges, 1987) and didn't really know where to go next. Intuitively, we knew that investing in our staff was the best investment we could make. So we invested heavily in staff development (ITIP, TESA, Mastery Learning and Writing Across the Curriculum) while looking nation-wide for a model that would take us beyond effective schools and help us raise the expectations of our community. The five phone call rule says that five calls will connect you with the best experts in the country. It was Dan Duke, a professor at Lewis and Clark University, who referred us to Dr. John Champlin who had re-normed Johnson City School District in New York State.

## The OBE Process

When we made contact with John Champlin at the National Center for Outcome Based Education, we found that OBE is the only system wide school improvement process that has been proven effective by the National Diffusion Network (Mamary, 1985). Johnson City, New York, was a real live success story - one that you could see, talk to, and experience (Vickery, 1985). Here was a process that could, in fact, produce sustainable success for our staff and students. And with Dr. Champlin as a process consultant, Pasco School District gained access to the skill and experience that would enable us to implement the OBE process.

The OBE process includes the six essential elements mentioned earlier (see Figure 2): Vision, Knowledge, Action, Results, Restructuring and Teaming. The first four components are the tough questions shown in Figure 1. The remaining two components are learning stages. "Restructuring" makes the process more dynamic and flexible. "Teaming" extends the process by engaging more people in the organization.

**Vision** - The vision for OBE is, in itself, transformational. It is based on the premise that "ALL Students Can Learn" (Benjamin Bloom. 1974). For our district of 7000 students, where half are minority and nearly half qualify for free and reduced lunch, that was stretch. Our teachers, however, saw the need and embraced the vision of "success for all students." A formal mission statement, outlining the OBE concept was enacted into policy by the board. That policy included five "exit outcomes" (Figure 3) which described the skills which our students needed in order to be successful in the 21st century: self esteem, concern for others, self directed learning, process skills and basic thinking skills. Finally, there was a paradigm shift in beliefs and attitudes. After a two year process of building ownership and commitment 90% of the staff shared a common belief in the concept of student success and ten other core belief statements.

**Knowledge** - Training teachers in the use of the instructional process took three years. A core of teachers was trained from each building with the expectation that they in turn would train others. Entire buildings were given five days of summer training in a three year rotational process. Eventually, trainers were trained for each building. Even then, one teacher was reported to have said, "Oh, you want me to DO this?!" It took that kind of sustained effort to show that we were serious about transforming our school system.

**Action** - Outcome based education is based on what we know from research to be "best knowledge." Too often, we "know" what to do, but don't "do" it. For the past two years Pasco has worked on implementation of three goals:

Instructional Process - Teachers are trained in a fourteen step "instructional process" based on mastery learning and the best research on student learning (Bloom, 1984). Each step checks for student mastery to insure student learning throughout the lesson or unit. We don't wait until the end of the unit to discover that the student missed step one.

Reality Therapy - Teachers and students are encouraged to accept responsibility for their own behavior. (Glasser, 1975) For students, a three step counseling process takes the place of traditional punishment and discipline. For staff, all of us take responsibility for influencing each other to do what we said that we would do and to act proactively to meet our own needs within the framework of the organization (Glasser, 1986).

Teaming - All teachers work together in teams of two to four teachers. Team members share responsibility for student behavior, student grouping and student learning. They provide support for each other (and accountability) when implementing new instructional processes.

Follow through with training for, and implementation of, these goals was the responsibility of core teams at the building and district level. Building teams meet weekly and include the principal and 25% of the staff. The District team, which meets monthly, includes one teacher and one administrator from each building. These teams act as change agents to insure implementation with integrity (Hall & Hord, 1987).

**Results** - Outcome Based Education focuses on outputs rather than inputs. For example we used to "do staff development to people" without addressing what we wanted teachers "to be able to do" as a result of the training. To help us avoid that syndrome, Pasco has been working with researchers at Brigham Young University for the last two years to validate the school improvement process and to measure student progress (Hyatt, 1990). During that time we have also been partners with the Washington Roundtable in seeking new ways to measure outcomes. Results show that we have good staff support in the areas that we have invested most heavily in - vision, belief and instructional process. Two years into the process, base line data show that students' attitudes about their success go down the

longer they are in school and that they feel least successful in the area that we teach most - knowledge. Pasco, like other districts doing similar studies, is finding that we have a long way to go in order to make all students feel and be successful. Action research (Holly & Southworth, 1989) is one way that we are addressing this issue. One recent project showed how much "off task" time at risk students spent and suggested ways to increase student engagement.

In addition to the formal evaluation steps above, we continue to build into the culture an expectation that all of us continue to learn how to do our jobs better. This message is reinforced by a host of measures ranging from action research to this series of questions that we ask each other regularly:

- what went well?
- what would you do differently (next time)?
- what help do you need now?

We, like others (Wick, 1987), are finding that this ongoing informal assessment is more important than the formal assessment. The whole purpose of OBE is to create a learning organization; one that learns how to create greater student success. The depth and richness of the outcome measures help schools learn how to create successful outcomes (LaRocque & Coleman,1989).

**Restructuring** - Deming suggests that the most important job of the leader is to find and remove barriers in the structure that prevent people from being successful. That involves putting the four steps above together in a dynamic cycle. During the 1990-91 year, Pasco discovered that there was a gap in reading between what we wanted (all students at or above grade level) and what we were getting. We worked with the core teams and the reading specialists to define what we wanted - enthusiastic successful readers. We provided release time so that our best reading specialist could visit classrooms and buildings to find out what was actually happening (results). We increased our knowledge about reading by sending district teams to visit successful programs in Texas and California and attend conferences on alignment of reading curriculum. Finally, we built action plans for what we would do in the fall of 1991. All of that was reviewed in a two day Focus Congress with representatives (85 people) of those affected by the decision. The focus for 1991-92 is a series of specific reading targets that are based on research:

- increase time spent on teaching reading
- place students appropriately and develop plans to move them aggressively through the curriculum.
- double the books checked out of the library
- increase student attendance
- teach reading in the students best language (Spanish)

The Focus Congress enabled all of the key players to come to a common understanding (Cronin & Goodspeed, 1989) on what we wanted, what we

knew from research, what we were going to measure and what we were going to do to get there.

**Teams** - The power of the OBE process comes from teams. Once the focus and culture of the organization (Saphier and King, 1985) becomes clear, you have agreement around the central governing ideas (Senge). Then you have the capacity to create anything you want. The major mission of teams is to insure the success of their students - by shared planning, shared placement of students and shared responsibility for student discipline. The teams also provide support for teachers as they put new knowledge into practice. Sticking with something new for the 6-8 tries that it takes to get comfortable (Joyce and Showers, 1988) takes perseverance for the teacher and support from the team.

Once you have these six elements in place, teachers know how the system works. They now have the power to create on their own (Fritz, 1984). One team decided to provide a four week "head start" for their first graders in August before school started. Another made plans to keep the school library open during the summer to increase reading skills. Teams enrolled in our on campus Master's program (partnered with Eastern Washington University) make proposals for district wide changes in areas such as retention and grading. With the ideas "bubbling up" from teams we have hundreds of sources of learning for the organization, not just a few at the top.

## The Purpose of OBE

Outcome based education is about learning - learning to create and demonstrate success for staff and for students. **Outcome based education is a systemic process of working together to learn how to create success for every student.**

| | |
|---|---|
| It is systemic - | NOT a single event. |
| It is a process - | NOT another program. |
| It is team based - | NOT individually based. |
| It is learning - | NOT a set of fixed answers. |
| It is student success - | NOT just sorting kids. |

The "process" of OBE has been outlined in the four step diagram (Figure 1). The "purpose" of OBE is to use that process by applying the best of what we know about: 1) learning, 2) people, 3) organizations, 4) planning, and 5) change. When applied in these five areas, Outcome Based Education can be seen as a full-fledged systemic process designed to create the learning organization envisioned by Senge (Figure 4). The purpose is to totally transform school districts so that their capacity to create student success is enhanced.

**Systems Change** - How do you transform an organization in the five areas above? You do so through a consistent process of systemic change. For example, when we set out to train our teachers in use of the instructional

process we found time and other barriers to change standing in our way. We used substitutes to provide release time for 25% of our staff but then couldn't find the time to train the rest of the staff. We negotiated changes in the teacher's contract that gave them three days per year for OBE training. When time was still a problem we implemented a series of five early release days. When implementation bogged down, we trained five district trainers. A year later we made their assignments half time teacher and half time process consultant. When demand increased, we trained an additional 22 trainers so that some were available in every building. This year we are developing, by teacher request, increased capacity to demonstrate and provide feedback in the classroom (Joyce and Showers, 1988). This is but one of dozens of new systems that have been created to make OBE work. Figure 5 provides additional examples of the systems changes that have been made.

**What went well?**

Adoption - The decision to adopt this model was made by the board and by the administrative staff. That assured their ownership and commitment during the difficult times that followed.

Commitment - The board publicly committed to the process by putting the vision and mission into policy, by going school to school to talk about it, and by committing serious funding for this process. Overcoming the feeling that "this is just one more program that will go away" takes considerable effort.

Vision/Beliefs - We invested two years in making sure that everyone knew the vision and the beliefs and why they were important. When we assessed at the end of the first year, we weren't there yet so we went back to buildings and did it over again. It let people know we were serious.

Union Meetings - By coincidence, the union invited the superintendent to meet with the representative assembly. We met three times per year to talk about problems with implementation. After each session concerns were listed and clarified. Before the next session, action reports were given on what had been done in each of those areas.

Consultant - The outside consultant, John Champlin, held our feet to the fire and made us accountable every two months when he returned to the district. Having a consultant who has been there and is committed to help you grow is a tremendous asset.

**What would we have done differently?**

Parents - We would have, should have, involved parents earlier. They have the power to be supporters or opponents of what you are doing. The more they know about what you are doing, the more likely they are to understand and be supportive. We wanted to wait until teachers were comfortable with the process before involving parents but when parents became concerned a district level parent core team was formed to advise

the district on how to involve parents and each school developed an ongoing plan to build parent understanding of the process.

Outcomes - We are only now focusing on specific measurable outcomes. For several years we operated on the single vision of "success for every child." We have since learned that we need specific, measurable targets like those described above for reading (English, 1988). If I had it to do over again, I would make that transition earlier. We probably went down some streets that we didn't need to by not setting clearer outcomes sooner.

Celebration - Clearer targets and smaller bite size steps would have given us more cause for celebration along the way. Tremendous effort went into making tough changes in the district. Schedule changes, for instance, broke all of the old rules based on seniority and tradition in order to create common planning time for teacher teams. That was hard emotionally and logistically. Had we set it more clearly as a goal - we could well have celebrated some well earned success.

Principals - We would have invested more in principal training and feedback. We gave teachers lots of help but basically told principals "take that mountain." Principals were asked to become change agents with little formal training. All of our major goals - instructional process, teaming, and reality therapy - called for challenging the status quo and putting in place new structures. They needed and deserved more manageable bite sized steps as well.

## Conclusion

Living and modeling outcome based education is a tremendous challenge but it is also rewarding. Three or four times each year we "hit the wall" and can't see our way over the newest obstacle. When, together, we overcome that obstacle it builds a sense of accomplishment and commitment in each of us. We really are building the capacity to create a learning organization - one where all staff and students have success.

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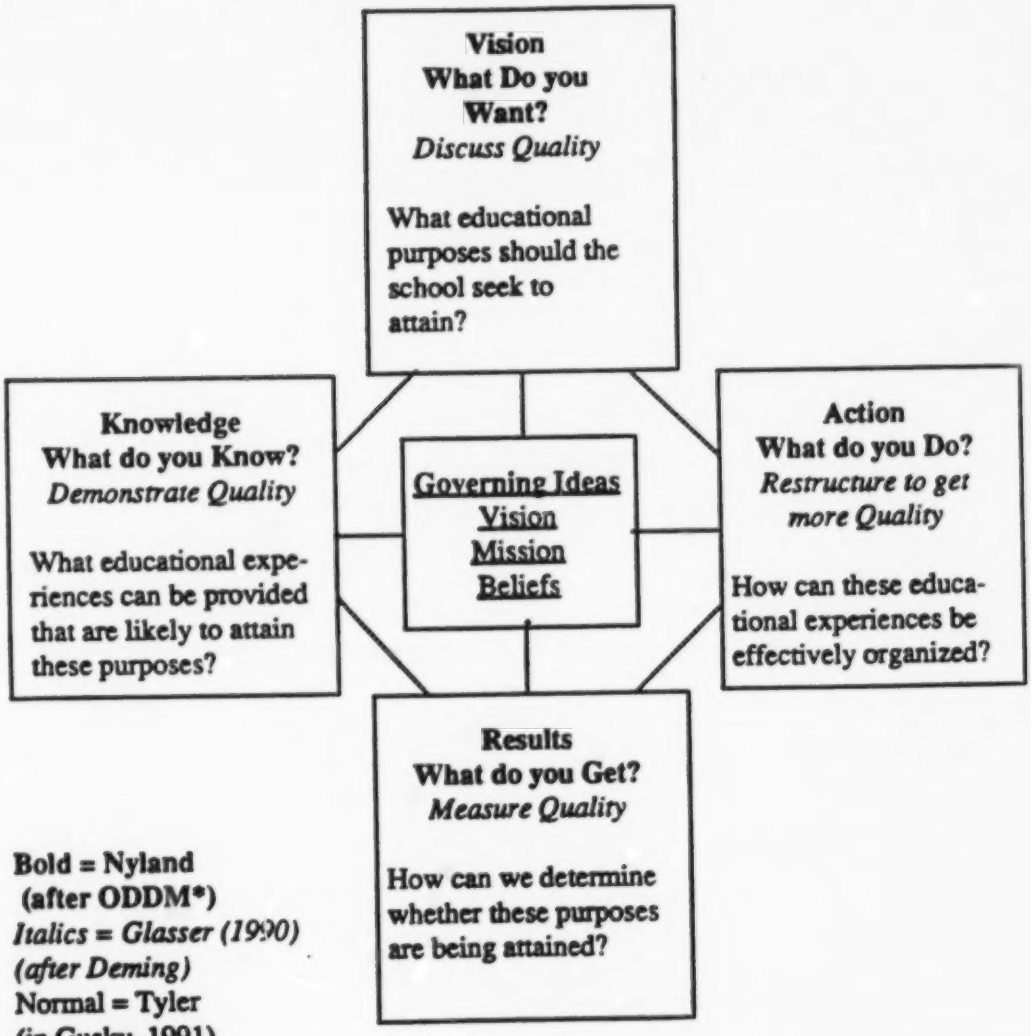
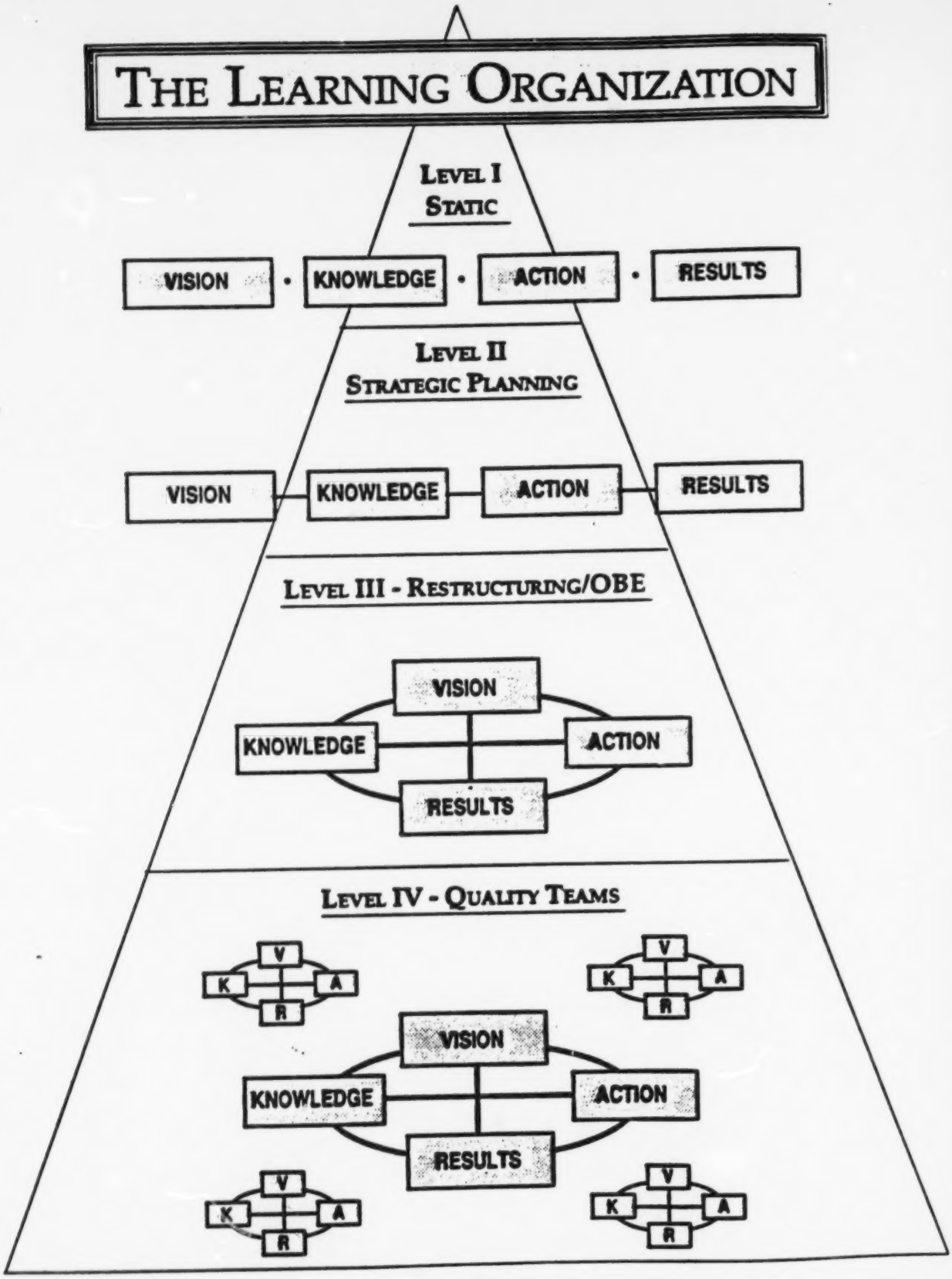
# SUCCESS CONNECTIONS*

**Address each of these areas when you want to make a quality decision**




**Bold = Nyland (after ODDM*)**
*Italics = Glasser (1990) (after Deming)*
Normal = Tyler (in Gusky, 1991)
Underlined = Senge (1990)

**Figure 1**


THE LEARNING ORGANIZATION
LEVEL I
STATIC
VISION
KNOWLEDGE
ACTION
RESULTS
LEVEL II
STRATEGIC PLANNING
VISION
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ACTION
RESULTS
LEVEL III - RESTRUCTURING/OBE
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**Figure 2**

# WHAT WE WANT MOST FOR OUR STUDENTS

## What Employers Want

Once upon a time, bank tellers counted out cash, deposited checks, and made sure the balance sheet added up at quitting time.

The typical bank teller these days must also be able to advise customers on a wide range of financial services, make "spot" decisions, and use a wealth of database information previously available only to managers.

The transformation of the teller's role, argues a report issued jointly by the American Society for Training and Development and the U.S. Department of Labor, is indicative of the extraordinary changes in the workplace—changes with important consequences for the education of students in grades K-12. "To be effective in the workplace, the new bank teller may not need to have the same degree of skills in a narrow area of expertise, but instead must have a good knowledge of a wide range of skills," the report argues.

As part of a major research project examining the skills needed for work, the report, *Workplace Basics: The Skills Employers Want*, identifies seven skills groups. They are:

Figure 3

**Personal Management: Self-Esteem, Goal Setting/**

**Learning to Learn.**

**Organizational Effectiveness and Leadership.**

**Competence in Reading, Writing, and Computation.**

**Adaptability: Creative Thinking and Problem Solving.**

**Listening and Oral Communication.**

**Group Effectiveness: Interpersonal Skills, Negotiation, and Teamwork.**

Source: *Workplace Basics: The Skills Employers Want*, American Society for Training and Development and U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration, 1988.



## What Pasco Wants

Each student in Pasco should provide evidence of growth in five "Exit Behaviors:"

**SELF ESTEEM**

The student shows high self esteem as a learner and as a person

**LEARNING TO LEARN**

The student is a self-directed learner

**BASIC THINKING SKILLS**

The students shows success in the basics and in thinking skills

**PROCESS SKILLS**

The student is able to solve problems, communicate, make decisions, work in groups and be accountable

**CONCERN FOR OTHERS**

The student shows evidence of concern for others.

# The Outcome Based Education "System"

Outcome Based Education is a "System" of five interlocking disciplines that are similar to Peter Senge's "Learning Organization."

| **OBE System Applies Best Knowledge of:** | **Senge's Learning Organization Entails Mastery of:** |
|---|---|
| 1) learning | 1) personal mastery |
| 2) people | 2) common vision |
| 3) organizations | 3) teaming |
| 4) quality | 4) mental models |
| 5) change | 5) systems |

**Figure 4**

## System Learning

Peter Senge's book, The Fifth Discipline, and Glasser's book, The Quality School, describe the processes neede to create "learning organizations" or "systems learning." Pasco uses the following "systems" to help us hold the focus on what we want to become:

**Mastery Learning** - Teachers use one or more of a dozen different ways to check for student mastery daily rather than wait until the end of the unit.

**Teacher Teams** - Teams of two to four teachers meet several times a week to insure continuous progress learning for all students on their team. Teams also provide support and encouragement for implementation on new teaching techniques.

**Reality Therapy** - All staff, district wide use reality therapy to encourage students (and staff) to take responsibility for their own behavior. Student problems are handled in a three step process: step one with the teacher, step two with the counselor, step three with the principal. Students go to the time out room to develop plans for changing their behavior.

**Classroom Practices** - Ten regular practices, like attendance, grading, homework and discipline, have been discussed district-wide. For each, we have agreed on the purpose, the non-purpose, the procedure, and what it will look like for teachers and for students.

**Staff Development** - Most training focuses on "knowing" and "understanding." In addition, Pasco's program includes feedback and coaching to insure application in the classroom.

**Process Consultants** - Change efforts often wear out as we go back to the way it used to be. An outside consultant, together with district trained process consultants help us "hold the focus" on our vision.

**Governing Ideas** - Common agreement on vision, mission, and ten research based belief systems give a common focus on "success for every student." That means that decisions can be made closer to the student.

**Decision Making** - Decisions at all levels are made by asking: what we want, what we know, what we are getting, what we believe and what we do.

**Tough Questions** - All employees have been trained in ways to influence the system by asking tough questions: What are we pretending not to know? What can we do differently to get more of what we want? What do we really want and what will it look like?

**Site Survey** - Outside teams come "on site" to get direct feedback from each school. Meetings are held with building teams and random interviews are held with staff. The feedback provides targets for the next level of growth and learning.

**Communications System** - Teacher teams are linked to building teams which are linked to a district team. This provides for two way communication, problem solving, and consensus building.

**Figure 5**

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